Farewell

At the end of December, 2010, the department bade farewell to Fr. Boikanyo Moatshe, who had worked as our Advocacy Officer since April. Then at the end of January, 2011, we bade farewell to Mnini Ntombela, who was the SADC Trade Desk Coordinator for the previous four years. We are very grateful for all that both of them have done for J&P during their time with us, and we wish them well in their future endeavours.

Departmental Activities
Annual General Conference

The J&P Annual General Conference was held from the 24-27 February 2011 in Johannesburg. It brought together 52 representatives from 22 of the 29 dioceses in South Africa, Botswana and Swaziland. The conference registered significant growth in J&P over the past year with the number of functioning parish J&P groups increasing from 122 to 188 during this period. The ‘Bishop Kevin Dowling Award’ for the most improved diocese, was won by Bloemfontein Archdiocese, taking it from Bethlehem Diocese that won in 2010.
Public Annual General Meeting

For the first time the department held an Annual General Meeting to which the public was invited. This was held on 26 February, 2011 at Sacred Heart College in Johannesburg and was attended by more than 200 people. The AGM focused on the theme “Is there any hope at all for the poor?”, with addresses by COSATU Secretary General Mr. Zwelinzima Vavi and Prof Tinyiko Maluleke, a theologian from the University of South Africa (UNISA) and the former SACC President.

Training of diocesan animators

The fifth block of the General Training Session for diocesan J&P animators took place in March and April 2011 with 48 animators from 24 dioceses. This showed consistent attendance from the 45 animators from 24 dioceses in 2010. They gained formation in Climate Change/ COP17, Integrated Development Planning (IDPs) and Land Reform advocacy.

Consultation for mentors of diocesan trainees

The annual consultation for Mentors was held from 22-23 February 2011. 39 Participants from 21 dioceses attended, showing a marked improvement from the 31 participants from 18 dioceses in 2010. Mentors are people who are experienced in J&P who accompany and assist trainees in implementing their training back in the diocese.
Workshops for clergy and pastoral workers

Over the past year, at the invitation of the bishops, the J&P Coordinator conducted training workshops for clergy and pastoral workers for the first time in the four dioceses of Eshowe, Kokstad, Port Elizabeth and Francistown and for the second time in Mariannhill and Port Elizabeth. The workshops focused on Justice and Peace Ministry and its role in evangelisation.

For the first time in recent years, a three-day workshop on "Bringing the African Synod Home: Justice and Peace Ministry" was held in April for the 22 students of the Theology class at St John Vianney Seminary in Pretoria.

Workshops for parish representatives

Over the past year workshops for parish representatives have been carried out in four dioceses. In Eshowe, Polokwane and Ingwavuma, introductory workshops to J&P ministry were conducted, and in Gaborone, Botswana, a diocesan workshop focused on access to social grants.

Regional Conferences

To enable parish J&P members to receive a broader experience in justice and peace issues, regional conferences took place in four different locations in 2010. The KwaZulu Natal Conference took place in Newcastle (46 participants from 8 dioceses) with special focus on local government advocacy and service delivery. In Galimma (Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Manzini, Swaziland), 71 J&P members from 5 dioceses participated in the conference in Lydenburg which had a special focus on human trafficking and xenophobia. In the Cape conference in Port Elizabeth, 63 participants from 5 dioceses focused on substance and sexual abuse, gender relations, abortion, human trafficking and citizen participation in local government. And finally, in the conference in Botswana-Free-West (Botswana, Free State and North West) in Klerksdorp, the 65 participants from 7 dioceses, focused on environmental destruction, xenophobia, and gender relations. It is hoped that the 245 conference participants from 26 dioceses will be able to strengthen the growth of J&P in their respective parishes.

J&P priorities and working groups activities

Over the past three years, the J&P Department has focused on seven priority areas: Environmental Justice, Economic Justice, Good Governance and Crime, Xenophobia, Gender Relations, Land Reform, and Trade Justice in the SADC region. A Land Working Group has functioned throughout this time, meeting quarterly to assist the development of this priority focus. Then, in the past year, Consultative Working Groups of 5-6 people each were created to assist J&P’s focus on Environmental Justice, Economic Justice, Good Governance and Crime, and Gender Relations. These are now all meeting regularly.
Roundtable on Media Freedom

In October 2010, a Roundtable discussion was organized together with the Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office on the Protection of Information Bill and the Media Appeals Tribunal being proposed by the ANC. The high-profile speakers included a representative of the Department of State Security, the ANC Spokesperson, Jackson Mthembu, the Press Ombudsman and representatives of leading Media NGO’s, all of whom provoked a lively discussion and debate among the 27 participants, including four bishops.

Focus on Climate Change and COP 17

From 28 November to 9 December 2011, the 17th annual Conference of Parties (COP), focused on high-level negotiations about Climate Change, will take place in Durban. The Heads of State of most of the countries in the United Nations will be there to participate in this “World Cup of Climate Change”.

This offers a rare opportunity to highlight the urgency of addressing the environmental destruction that is threatening our planet. Our J&P Department therefore decided to make this COP 17 a major focus of our action in 2011. We began by making a presentation on the issue to all our bishops at their January Plenary Session with the assistance of Prof Mary Scholes from Wits University. Then, in May, a consultation on COP 17 was held in Johannesburg to inform and motivate clerical, religious and lay Catholic leadership to be involved in the events related to COP 17. Over 80 people participated, including representatives of priests from 14 dioceses, religious superiors or their representatives, leaders of national lay associations and several Catholic media. The full report of the consultation is available on request.

Fr Albert Nolan presenting on ‘The Theology of Creation’ during the Climate change consultation

Research on Impact of Free Trade Agreements on Small-Scale Farmers

At the end of 2010, our J&P SADC Trade Desk concluded a research project to assess the impact of regional integration according to the Regional Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on small-scale farmers in three sample countries (Malawi, Mozambique and Lesotho). The final report of the research project was published and diffused to the relevant stakeholders. The conclusions were presented at a roundtable in November 2010 with the participation of a representative of the Department of Trade and Industry and Professor Shadrack Ghuuto, the Director of Unisa’s Centre for African Renaissance Studies. Unfortunately, we were forced to close the SADC Trade Desk at the end of January 2011 when the funding dried up.
World Social Forum

In February 2011, Philani Mkhize, our Land Desk Coordinator attended the World Social Forum in Dakar, Senegal, and participated in a workshop on Land Grabbing.

Consultation of Bishops on Land Issues

The Annual Consultation of Bishops on land Issues took place in March 2011. The 6 participating bishops shared, analysed and reflected on their diocesan experiences of land issues, as well as on broader land issues. There was acknowledgement of the role played by the J&P Land Desk in assisting the bishops to deal with land issues in their dioceses, such as land invasions, conflicts with traditional leaders, land donations, land transfers, or workshops to empower local communities. From now on, though, the Land Desk is focusing on the development of five communities to become models of good practice of agrarian reform and local economic development. One significant resolution of this year’s consultation was that the bishops will request an audience with the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform.

International Exchanges around land issues

Our bishops’ knowledge of land issues was deepened through exchanges organized by the Land Desk. In August 2010, the Desk hosted a visit of two bishops and the Coordinator of the Pastoral Commission for the Land from the Brazilian Bishops’ Conference. They addressed the SACBC plenary session in the context of a day-long reflection on the state of land reform in South Africa and the Church’s role in promoting it. Then, in September 2010, Bishop Graham Rose, along with diocesan Coordinators from Witbank and Mariannhill was part of a delegation of South African partners that visited Germany to engage with German stakeholders on local economic development.

Basic Needs Basket Survey

Over the past year, the J&P Department launched the Basic Needs Basket Survey, to determine the impact of the increase in food prices on poor families. Diocesan animators were trained to conduct the survey and thirteen (13) of the twenty-nine (29) dioceses are now participating in it. The results will assist our advocacy for economic justice at municipal, provincial and national levels.

Xenophobia and Peace-Building

A weekend training to understand and counter xenophobia was organised in two sessions in October and November 2010. In the first session 21 animators from 11 dioceses were trained, and in the second session 28 animators from 12 dioceses were trained. This was done in collaboration with IDASA. Since then, several dioceses have managed to organise activities raising events locally.
Pastoral Letter on South Africa's Local Government Elections

In January 2011, in order to prepare for South Africa's upcoming Local Government Elections, the J&P Department through its Good Governance Working Group wrote a Pastoral letter which was endorsed by all the bishops and published as soon as the date of the election was announced in March. The letter expressed how vital it is for all parish communities to get involved in ensuring accountability from those elected to office. It was also necessary to deepen an understanding of a culture of democracy and opposition as something that is worthy. The pastoral letter was translated into Afrikaans and Zulu with the help of bishops.

Diocesan Stories

Helping people apply for Identity Documents – Johannesburg and Ingvawuma

The Belgravia (Johannesburg) group conducted an ID Campaign for people living in the 'Hostels' comprising mostly unemployed former mine workers from the rural areas who relied on soup and food handouts from St Anne's Parish in Johannesburg. Home Affairs and the Ward Councillor were persuaded to come to the parish to organise the ID’s and they continued to do it regularly. The campaign was a success with over 300 people having received their identity documents.

Similarly, in Ingvawuma Diocese, J&P assisted a needy woman to get her ID. This, in turn, enabled her to get a house as well as a social grant.

Dioceses advocate for road construction - Durban and Umzimkulu

In the Bergville area in Durban Archdiocese, the road conditions were very bad creating huge problems for the community especially in emergency situations such as sickness. J&P approached the Local Government authorities to propose the construction of roads, with success. Now people have access to ambulance services and are no longer being carried in wheelbarrows to hospital.

Similarly, in Umzimkulu, faced with a bad road that required coffins to be carried 300 meters, J&P persuaded a local contractor to construct a road to the cemetery. Now the hearse can drive all the way to the cemetery.

J&P encourages peaceful conflict resolution - Klerksdorp

After the racial murder of the legendary Eugene Terreblanche there was fear of a high level of conflict erupting in the diocese. J&P in the diocese through the Damietta Peace Institute organised a Conflict Management workshop to try and bring peace in the diocese. Although the whites who had promised to come did not arrive, the workshop enabled the black residents to confront the issue and a roadmap for reconciliation was developed.

J&P confronts corruption - Bloemfontein

The J&P group in Bloemfontein was approached by community members with complaints of nepotism and corruption around the allocation of RDP Houses. J&P confronted the local government to account for their processes on the allocation of these houses and realised that there were discrepancies in the process. The exposing of such corrupt activities resulted in the right people being allocated their houses.